

Feast of the Holy Trinity – June 7, 2020*

Homily ~ Fr. Ed Hislop

Exodus 34:4b-6,8-9 “Moses when up Mount Sinai, taking along the two stone tablets.”

2 Corinthians 13:11-13 “Mend your ways...live in peace...”

John 3:16-18 Christ did not come to condemn the world but to save it.



We gather around the Lord’s Table on this Feast day of Holy Communion in the midst of enormous pain throughout our country and, we hope, in our own heart. A pandemic which continues to haunt us and from which recovery seems to be uncertain, even today as we “open up.”

And then there is the hatred and violence we see and feel all around us welling up from 400 years of oppression. We know and feel that we are not isolated from the struggle of so many persons of color.

Racism is alive and well in every part of our country, even sadly in our own community.

We know, if we are honest, that the terrible violence of these days, the looting and fires, though not an acceptable means of protest, comes from the too long oppression of human beings who are themselves victims of violence and hatred as they are told again and again that they do not belong and that their life is expendable.

The criminal murder of George Floyd, only the latest instance of a person of color dying in such a manner, reveals, a hatred, long in the making, which has marred and stained the hopeful vision and the often spoken promise our country. This incident “has provoked justified anger and peaceful protest” throughout our country and in our own Missoula community.

Too many find it too easy to blame others perceived as different for the troubles and challenges we all face, whether they be persons of color, immigrants, refugees (legal or illegal), the poor, different or the sick. Even people who claim faith ascribe to that way of believing and acting.

Such issues, they are quick to say, are merely political and have no place in the life, spirit, vision or proclamation of the Church. Our true Catholic faith does not ascribe to that heresy. Though, as a Church, we have not been immune to racism in our own history and attitudes, still, always and forever, we are a people of the Gospel of Christ. A gospel we are mandated to proclaim and to live in season and out season, welcomed or unwelcomed.

It is a Gospel, we do not only *hold up*, but must live, believe and proclaim in the midst of the real world in which we live with all others—all others.

A gospel which continually, day in and day out, both challenges and demands, that as we might ask “why” all this happens, we must first name the evil and see the darkness which for too long has consumed the light.

The “national sin” of racism, in which we all participate in some fashion, both as persons and as a Church, if not by our actions, too often by our silence, is an evil perpetrated when division and polarization among us is promoted and even valued.

It is always wrong to persecute those who are different or to desire separation or “supremacy” as a mark of being “great again.” Too many tolerate racism and let themselves become deaf to the cry of so many, especially when they seem to be far away.

Naming the evil, facing the darkness, for those who truly “hold up” the Word of God and the Gospel of Christ in their heart, demands that the heart change; and that justice for all becomes a never-ending mantra and action.

The word of God, *which holds us up*, challenges each person, day in and day out, from generation to generation to live and act on the truth that every person of every color and race is made in the image and likeness of God, all sharing the very breath of God the creator. To deny that truth, or to live or speak as if it were not true, is evil.

"Violent rhetoric, selfishness and even the crude appropriation of religious symbols conspire to produce an evil atmosphere in which the sin of racism may flourish unchecked. "The purveyors of such polarization among us must be left behind." From a Pastoral letter of Cardinal Joseph Tobin, Archbishop of Newark, N, June 3, 2020

In the midst of it all today, we live in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, a mystery rooted in relationship, conversation and the making of an eternal place at the table for all. The Word we have heard seems to be speaking to this day and time, even as it brings meaning to this feast. We hear of Moses "holding up" the Stone tablets of God's commands, which demand a new way of living, caring and serving.

A striking image for today, as Moses, daring to carry and hold the Word of God, bows down to the ground in worship and humility. He feels both the weight and the promise of God's word. A word he holds with sincerity in his heart as he grasps the truth of its weight.

Paul reminds us, as we enter the mystery of this Holy Communion of God, to mend our ways... to encourage one another, to agree on the vision of Christ and to live in peace together.

And John tells us that God did not send Christ to condemn the world but to save it—to save it through belief in the Christ, belief in his ways and in his truth. A burden we must bear together, holding it up as *the* way of life and justice. The words in the book, he seems to say, mean nothing, unless the love of neighbor, every neighbor, is the way of living belief.

The words alone do not save, only a place at table, only a conversation, only a love so deep and so real that life is changed, the oppressed are freed and every person is greeted with a holy kiss.

This is a time to remember the words of Martin Luther King Jr., *"Darkness cannot drive our darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."*

It is a day to daringly remember the words of Mary, Mother of the Lord, who sings of *One whose mercy is from age to age to those who fear him... who has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart... who has thrown down the rulers from their thrones, but lifted up the lowly."*

As we move forward let the words of Moses, who bore the burden of the Word he held up, become our words, burden and our hope: *"If I find favor with you, O Lord, do come along in our company. This is indeed a stiff-necked people; yet pardon our wickedness and sins and receive us as your own."*

We will "hold up" the word of God for all to see.

BUT WE WILL BELIEVE IT, LIVE IT AND ACT ON IT.



Blessed
Trinity
CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY
Spirit of
Christ Mission

1475 Eaton Street ~ Missoula, MT 59801

*Week of the murder of George Floyd and President Trump dispersing protesters at the White House and holding a bible in front of St. John's Church near the White House.